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JOHN BUE/PARIS

NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE FIRST HURDLE

ANNCR:

THE LONG-HERALDED DISCUSSION BETWEEN DEVELOPING AND INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS ON FUTURE WORLD ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS HAS STARTED IN A LOW-PROFILE BUT POTENTIALLY POSITIVE FORUM. VOA'S JOHN BUE HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS ON THE FIRST TEN-DAY SESSION OF THE FOUR SPECIALIZED COMMISSIONS IN WHICH THE DIALOGUE HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE.

VOICE:

IT TOOK A WHOLE YEAR TO SET THEM UP, WITH THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS FIRST WANTING TO DISCUSS ENERGY ONLY. EVEN AFTER THEY AGREED TO INCLUDE ALL MAJOR ASPECTS OF FUTURE WORLD ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE INTEREST-GAP IS SO ENORMOUS THAT ONE WONDERED HOW THE DISCUSSION COULD START. THEN, WITH THE IDEA OF FOUR SPECIALIZED COMMISSIONS, THINGS BEGAN TO FALL INTO PLACE. ON ENERGY, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN OIL PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS. IN THAT COMMISSION, THE FIRST TEN-DAY SESSION WAS DEVOTED TO A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE ENERGY MARKET, WHICH ALSO WILL OCCUPY THE SECOND SESSION IN MARCH. IN APRIL THE QUESTION OF OIL PRICES -- A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS -- WILL BE UP FOR DISCUSSION. AMERICAN CO-CHAIRMAN STEPHEN BOSWORTH SAID HE THOUGHT THIS VITAL COMMISSION IS OFF TO A GOOD START AND INDICATED THAT IT WOULD BE GETTING AROUND LATER TO THE ISSUE CLOSEST TO THE HEART OF THE OPEC NATIONS, THE PROTECTION OF THE PURCHASING POWER OF ENERGY EXPORTS.

THE OTHER THREE COMMISSIONS DEAL WITH MATTERS WHICH HAVE LONG BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION IN VARIOUS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES. THEY HAVE MOVED EVEN FASTER IN SETTING UP THEIR WORK PLANS. AT ITS NEXT SESSION IN MARCH THE FINANCIAL COMMISSION IS TO CONTINUE A DISCUSSION ALREADY STARTED ON THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPING NATIONS, AND ON SURPLUSSES ACCUMULATED BY OPEC NATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE FIVEFOLD INCREASE IN OIL PRICES.

THE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION HAS SET ITS CALENDAR FOR FOUR SESSIONS TO BE HELD BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE COVERING THE MAIN ASPECTS OF QUESTIONS RAISED BY DEVELOPING NATIONS. THE RAW MATERIALS COMMISSION HAS SET UP A SIX-POINT PROGRAM, THE TWO FIRST POINTS TO BE TAKEN UP AT THE NEXT SESSION IN MARCH. THESE ARE SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF RAW MATERIALS AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT.

THE UNIQUE FEATURE OF THE DIALOGUE IS THAT IT IS NOT, FOR THE TIME BEING, A NEGOTIATION, BUT AN EFFORT TO SEEK CONCRETE SOLUTIONS TO IMMENSELY INTRICATE PROBLEMS. IT WILL CONTINUE BEING JUST THAT UNTIL THE SECOND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AT THE END OF THIS YEAR. THUS IT WILL NOT YIELD ANY SPECTACULAR RESULTS.

BUT SHELTERED AS IT IS FROM THE GLARE OF PUBLICITY AND INVOLVING ABOUT SIX HUNDRED EXPERTS AND SPECIALISTS, THE DIALOGUE IS NOW TAKING PLACE WITHIN A TRULY PRIVILEGED FORUM.

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